

A NEW CHAPTER IN CHURCH HISTORY.

The recent licensure of certain young men of "liberal" persuasion by the Presbytery of New York is to be regarded as a matter of more than passing interest. The widespread attention which it attracted, especially in the secular and semi-religious press, and the apparent surrender on the part of the Presbytery, of all that is distinctive of church doctrine, and of much that is vital to Christian faith, stamps this particular event as a waymark in the rapid departure of certain sections of the Church toward religious free-thinking.

We are not disposed to discuss at length the merits of this proceeding and its significance, but rather to quote freely from what we regard as the highest critical authority among publications of this country, on the source and integrity of the Christian faith.

In the May number of "The Bible Student" and **Teacher**, the proceedings of the Presbytery were discussed under the title: "Is it the Entering-Wedge in Presbyterianism?" The meeting of Presbytery discussed in that article was the initial one at which three young men, graduates of Union Seminary, New York, presented themselves for examination and licensure. The examinations were not sustained at this meeting, but an influential minority in the Presbytery earnestly insisted that they should be. "The Bible Student" characterizes this as "a startling attempt to prepare the way for the disintegration of the Presbyterian Church by bringing about a repudiation of essentials, not of Presbyterianism only, but of Evangelical Biblical Faith." It further says that the action of Presbytery in declining to license these young men "was taken because of their consummate ignorance on some important points, their muddled condition by reason of a false philosophy on many other points, and the denial of pretty much everything that the Presbyterian Church—and indeed, every branch of the Evangelical Church—regards as essential to Christianity."

Further: "In the course of that examination the three candidates denied substantially everything essential in the Presbyterian system."

"The Bible Student" quotes this summary of the examination as stated by "a theologically trained layman." The following doctrines seem to have been explicitly or implicitly denied:

- (1) The infallibility of the Scriptures as the rule of faith and practice.
- (2) The Essential Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and His consequent headship over the church.
- (3) The Virgin Birth of our Lord and the miraculous conception.
- (4) The Vicarious, Expiatory and Propitiatory Atonement of our Lord.
- (5) The resurrection of the Lord from the grave.
- (6) The efficacy of the all-prevailing Name of our Lord in Prayer—in fact, all phases of His priestly office—the sacrificial, the reconciling and the intercessory.
- (7) The fall of man.
- (8) The Bible doctrine of Sin.
- (9) Salvation by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as an Atoning Saviour.
- (10) Regeneration by the power of the Holy Ghost.
- (11) Miracles as the direct manifestation and interposition of the supernatural.

"In fact their examination brought out a general denial and repudiation of all that is vital and peculiar to Christianity, and their creed—so far as they can be said to have had any

—resolved itself into cold and Spiritually lifeless Unitarianism.

We read further that these summaries "agree substantially with reports printed" in leading New York papers.

It would have been needless to quote at length from the proceedings of this meeting of the Presbytery of New York and the comment thereon, but for the outcome of a subsequent one which totally reversed the just and wise action of the former. It is to be noted that the comment of the daily papers, as is usual in such cases, was severely critical of the action of the first meeting of Presbytery and sympathetic with the young men and those who favored their licensure. Of the second meeting "The Bible Student" says:

"At a meeting of the Presbytery on June 14 these young men were re-examined, after the report of a committee appointed to advise with them, and their examinations 'sustained' by a majority of the Presbytery. There was no evidence that there had been any substantial addition to the extent of their knowledge, or any radical change in its quality as unscriptural or anti-scriptural. They still adhered to the statements of their written papers, which embodied in the main a Ritschlian, naturalistic, socialistic scheme, rather than Evangelical Christianity.

Their denials both of the facts and the authority of the Bible, especially in its teachings concerning the incarnation and Resurrection of Christ, were explicit and unequivocal. Their answers throughout showed a haziness of view on essentials, and a critical and skeptical attitude towards the Scriptures, quite antagonistic to the genius and constitution of the Presbyterian Church, and entirely unfitting for a loyal ministry in it.

There is merely room here to say that such action is amazing—not to say unaccountable and indefensible.

The following comment on the action taken at the first meeting is significant in view of the reversal of that action at the second meeting. "Had it (the Presbytery) voted to sustain the examination and license them, the next step would have been to invite them to perjure themselves publicly when at their ordination the Moderator should propound to them the first two ordination questions:

"1. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?"

"2. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith of the Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?"

It is further affirmed very justly that to advocate such a course "would be fatal to the young men themselves. It would push perjured men into the pulpit, who at the same time have no message for a lost world. No Christian Church on earth has any use for such ministers." "The Presbytery was stopped by the law of self-preservation as well as the principles of common honesty." "To any one familiar with the facts of history it is plain as day that the denials of these young men—though now known as the 'Modern View' or the 'New Theology,'—are simply the old-fashioned infidelity of Paine and Voltaire. Prof. Howard Osgood, of Rochester Seminary, showed, years ago, that all its denials, when definitely stated, can be duplicated verbatim from the works of these worst enemies of Christianity."

The last number of "The Bible Student" contains an article entitled, "The New York Presbytery Completes its Defection," from which we quote:

In our June issue (p. 446) it was stated that, at its session